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ABSTRACT

Many Americans, terrified of violent crime, attempt to protect themselves by owning guns. However, statistics provided in this brief fact sheet reveal that people who choose to have a gun easily available are in fact putting their families and friends into greater danger since far more homicides occur during domestic arguments than during robberies. Persons in an enraged or depressed state with access to a gun often forget the original intent of ownership, and a highly charged non-lethal situation can easily turn into a homicide. A chart on percentage of homicides in the United States in 1988, by weapon used and sex of victim is included. (RB)

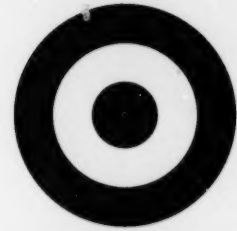
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Firearm Facts



GUNS AND CRIME: PROTECTION VERSUS PERIL

Many Americans, terrified of violent crime, attempt to protect themselves by owning guns. By turning to these weapons for safety, they may be putting themselves in greater danger. Most crimes do not result in homicides, nor do most homicides occur during the commission of another crime. An easily available gun can turn a highly charged non-lethal situation into a homicide.

A gun in the home is 43 times more likely to kill a family member or friend than it is to be used in self-defense.¹

A gun is more likely to cause a tragedy than it is to prevent one.

Three times more people are murdered during arguments than during robberies.²

Approximately 42% of murders in the United States take place during arguments; 14% of murders take place during robberies.²

In 1992, approximately 78% of murder victims were killed by someone they knew.²

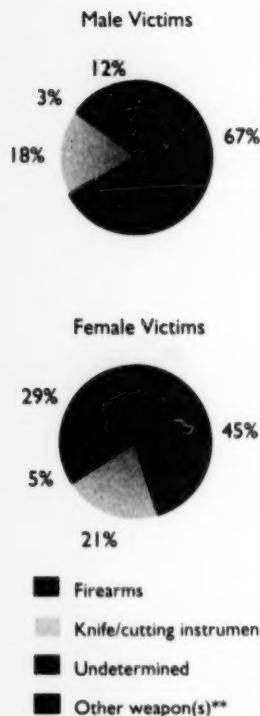
It is estimated that half of all American households have guns.³ Many of these firearms were purchased for reasons such as hunting or protection. The intended purpose of a gun in the home can be easily forgotten by an enraged or deeply depressed family member.

In one study, 75% of the people who shot and killed a family member did not consider that they could go to prison for using a gun. Half did not intend to kill when they drew their weapons.⁴

Anecdotal evidence suggests that even the most experienced gun owners can have their gun turned against them by an assailant.

One expert put it this way: "People without guns injure people; guns kill them."⁵

Using a gun is the easiest and fastest way to kill someone, as guns are five times more deadly than knives.⁶ A person does not need to be intent on homicide or even particularly angry to kill with a gun. A person with a gun does not have to struggle with the victim, touch the victim, or even get near the victim. All he or she needs to do is pull the trigger.



Percentage of homicides, by weapon used and sex of victim, United States, 1988 (Hammett et al, 1992, MMWR)

* 1988 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data do not include Florida or Kentucky

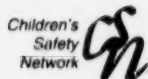
**including bodily harm

Data source: FBI-Supplementary Homicide Report

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